**Bain, Ken. *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Harvard University Press, 2004.  
ISBN: 0-674-01325-5**

*Ken Bain is Vice Provost for Instruction and Director of Montclair University’s Teaching and Learning Resource Center. His book’s central question, “what do the best college teachers do?,” is answered by drawing from a fifteen-year study into the practices and insights of highly successful teachers. These outstanding teachers were selected according to Bain because they had achieved “remarkable success in helping their students learn in ways that made a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how those students think, act, and feel” (5). The book covers a wide range of topics from preparing to teach, expectations of students, classroom management, ways to treat students, and methods of evaluating both students and self.*

Selected Passages:

In his first chapter “What Do They Know About How We Learn”, Bain cites four key concepts shared by these educators:

1. Knowledge is constructed, not received.

2. Mental models change slowly.

3. Questions are crucial.

4. Caring is critical.

In chapter 7, Bain admits his own confusion as a beginning teacher about the role of evaluation and assessment:

“Like so many other teachers, I failed to understand that testing and grading are not incidental acts that come at the end of teaching but powerful aspects of education that have an enormous influence on the entire enterprise of helping and encouraging students to learn. Without an adequate assessment, neither teachers nor students can comprehend the progress the learners are making, and the instructors can little understand whether their efforts are best suited to their students and objectives” (150).

**Dewey, John. *Experience & Education,* Collier Books 1938.**

**ISBN 0-02-013660-9**

*John Dewey (October 20, 1859 – June 1, 1952) has had a profound influence on education and philosophy around the world.* [*Hilda Neatby*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilda_Neatby)*, in 1953, wrote, "Dewey has been to our age what Aristotle was as to the late Middle Ages, not a philosopher, but* ***the*** *philosopher.” This small volume of 91 pages was written late in his career to most concisely present his thoughts about education in the light of his experience with progressive schools and the criticism his theories received. Like all of Dewey’s work, it is not a simple read.*

**Selected Passages:**

“The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experience in the future are restricted. Again, a given experience may increase a person’s automatic skill in a particular direction and yet tend to land him in a groove or rut; the effect again is to narrow the field of further experience” (25).

“On the other hand, if an experience arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future, continuity works in a very different way. Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into. The greater maturity of experience which should belong to the adult as educator puts him in a position to evaluate each experience of the young in a way in which the one having the less mature experience cannot do. It is then the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading” (35).

“In this direction he must, if he is an educator, be able to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth and what are detrimental. He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning. It is, among other things, the need for these abilities on the part of the parent and teacher which makes a system of education based upon living experience a more difficult affair to conduct successfully than it is to follow the patterns of traditional education” (39).

**Finkel, Donald L. *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut,* Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc. 2000.**

**ISBN 0-86709-469-9**

*Donald Finkel and Peter Elbow were among the founding faculty of The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, and were close friends. Though Donald died in September 1999, he fortunately wrote this simple 179-page book about his story of how he learned to produce significant learning in others. The book parallels ‘Gems of Pedagogy’ in its provocation of how to think with others about what we do. Peter wrote the Foreword to this book (and many other works later). This work by Donald Finkel is a treasure.*

**Selected Passages:**

“I taught this course with my mouth shut. I relied on the inquiry itself to do the teaching. That meant, “letting the books do the talking” and, just as much, it meant “letting the students do the talking.” But it left me with plenty to do. Aside from popping up with my tidbits of information (the least of my teaching activities), I had five major jobs: (1) I had to *organize* the inquiry for my students; (2) I had to figure out how to use my own analysis of the materials *to help the students understand* the texts — without imposing my understanding on them and thus robbing them of the inquiry that defined the course of study; (3) I had to *help my students develop the skills* necessary to pursue the inquiry; (4) I had to *evaluate* each student’s work so I could give grades at the end of the course, and, lest we forget my initial motive, (5) I had to  *participate* in the inquiry myself” (59).

“I spent the year 1996-1997 on Sabbatical. I decided to write a book for a general audience that would set forth the view of teaching I had developed over my nearly thirty years of teaching. I have spent my career experimenting with, discussing, reflecting on, and writing about pedagogy. The time had come to pull my ideas together into a coherent whole and to make them public. *Teaching with Your Mouth Shut* is the result” (172).

**Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education,* University of California Press 1984, 2003.**

**ISBN 0-520-23864-8**

*This is a book-length essay about the ethical ideal of creating the conditions that permit caring to flourish. The caring attitude, that attitude we all have experienced of both caring for others and being cared for, is universally accessible. This treatise explores how caring and the joy of that relatedness bears upon the actions of teachers and the organization of schools. She has given names to the two parties in caring as ordered pairs: “one-caring” refers to the first member and “cared-for” is the second member. In describing the former she uses feminine pronouns and the latter masculine.*

**Selected Passages:**

“The focus of our attention will be upon how to meet the other morally. Ethical caring, the relation in which we do meet the other morally, will be described as arising out of natural caring—that relation in which we respond as one-caring out of love or natural inclination. The relation of natural caring will be identified as the human condition that we, consciously or unconsciously, perceive as “good.” It is that condition toward which we long and strive, and it is our longing for caring—to be in that special relation—that provides the motivation for us to be moral. We want to be *moral* in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring” (4).

“Whatever I do in life, whomever I meet, I am first and always one-caring or one cared-for. I do not “assume roles” unless I become an actor. “Mother” is not a role; “teacher” is not a role. When I became a mother, I entered a very special relation—possibly the prototypical caring relation. When I became a teacher, I also entered a very special—and more specialized—caring relation… Clearly, in professions where encounter is frequent and where the ethical ideal of the other is necessarily involved, I am first and foremost one-caring and, second, enactor of specialized functions. As teacher, I am, first, one-caring” (175).

“The special gift of the teacher, then, is to receive the student, to look at the subject matter with him. Her commitment is to him, the cared-for, and he is—through that commitment—set free to pursue his legitimate projects. Again I want to emphasize that this view is not romantic but practical” (177).

“The cared-for is essential to the relation. What the cared-for contributes to the relation is a responsiveness that completes the caring” (181).

**Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*, John Wiley & Sons 2007.  
ISBN: 13:978-0-7879-9696-4**

*In 1997 Parker Palmer lit up the academic stage with his book,* The Courage to Teach, *gently challenging teachers to not give up hope but instead to look inward – to find their “inner landscape” – as a source for professional renewal. Now 71, Palmer spends most of his time supporting the work of the non-profit organization he founded, The Center for Courage & Renewal, which has touched over 25,000 educators to date.*

**Selected Passages from Chapter 3:**

“When we enter the conversation about teaching not through the door marked "How To Do It" but through one marked "The Human Condition," we discover a new world of discourse, a world that will challenge but also reward us if we are willing to engage what we find there. When I first opened that door, I quickly saw what I would need to confront--and its name is fear. When I teach poorly, it is not because of poor technique but because I have allowed fear to get the upper hand. In the bad classrooms I suffered as a student, fear nearly always lurked backstage. In fact, the culture of the academy itself is as fearful as any I have known. Education's nemesis is not ignorance but fear. Fear gives ignorance its power.”

“The courage to teach means defying these objectivist distortions and presenting the life of the mind for what it is-not a way of removing ourselves from things, but a way of recovering relatedness where it might otherwise be lost.”

“Authentic community-with our subjects, with our students, with our fellow teachers, and with our own souls-is at once the empowering outcome and renewing wellspring of the courage to teach.”

**Raider-Roth, Miriam B. *Trusting What You Know,* Jossey-Bass 2005.**

**ISBN 0-7879-7165-0**

*For twenty years Raider-Roth has taught students of all ages, from first grade to graduate school. She has also been a researcher at Harvard Project Zero. The examples in this book are taken from elementary education, specifically four children whose stories illustrate the tensions about knowing and not knowing, trust and mistrust, connecting and disconnecting. The human relationships in school fundamentally shape each student’s capacity to learn, know and trust. Their stories address an essential topic for all educators: pay close attention to relationships for they are the foundation of learning.*

**Selected Passages:**

“Looking at students through this relational lens lead us to ask fundamental and sometimes unsettling questions: How can we create classrooms in which culture of safety and truth prevails, allowing students to bring as much of their knowledge and their diverse selves to the table as they can? What do we as teachers do that inadvertently pushes students into a position in which they feel it necessary to suppress aspects of what they know? To what extent do students read all of our assignments and assessment measures relationally; carefully select the knowledge they believe can be hear; and thereby call into question the validity of these measures as accurate representations of what students know? In a sense, this last question challenges our most basic assumptions about schoolwork. We may assume that when we assign a project, administer a test, or require an essay to be written, the product we receive in some way reflects what the students now about the topic, concept, or issue. We must consider the possibility that students are offering a product that is as much a reflection of what they think teachers want or can hear as it is a reflection of what students actually know” (151).

“A critical aspect of learning to listen to the knowledge that students share involves developing structured and collaborative methods for both observing children engaged in their work and looking carefully at the work they create” (155).

“To begin, teachers must regularly experience ourselves as learners. It is important to know what it feels like to be a reader, a writer, a mathematician, a scientist, an artist, and an athlete. In remembering both the vulnerability and the exhilaration that learners experience, teachers can be more attuned to the student’s world. Similarly, assuming a learning stance assists teachers in recognizing our own ways of knowing and the ways in which these approaches both resonate and clash with those of our students” (157).

**Schön, Donald A. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action,***

**Basic Books 1983.**

**ISBN 0-465-06876-6**

*The central idea is ‘reflection-in-action’, which takes a bit to comprehend, unless of course it is the way you currently approach your own uncertainty. Schön offers many examples, which essentially describe what it means to be a professional.*

**Selected Passages:**

“In examples such as these, something falls outside the range of ordinary expectations. The banker has a feeling that something is wrong, though he cannot at first say what it is. The physician sees an odd combination of diseases never before described in a medical text. Tolstoy thinks of each of his pupils as an individual with ways of learning and imperfections peculiar to himself. The teachers are astonished by the sense behind a student’s mistake. In each instance, the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation” (68).

“In this sort of example, and in the examples of reflective teaching, managing, and therapy which I have given earlier, there is the recognition that one’s expertise is a way of looking at something which was once constructed and may be reconstructed; and there is both readiness and competence to explore its meaning in the experience of the client. The reflective practitioner tries to discover the limits of his expertise through reflective conversation with the client” (296).

From page 300:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Expert | Reflective Practitioner |
| I am presumed to know, and must claim to do so, regardless of my own uncertainty. | I am presumed to know, but I am not the only one in the situation to have relevant and important knowledge. My uncertainties may be a source of learning for me and for them. |
| Keep my distance from the client and hold onto the expert’s role. Give the client a sense of my expertise, but convey a feeling of warmth and sympathy as a “sweetener.” | Seek out connections to the client’s thoughts and feelings. Allow his respect for my knowledge to emerge from his discovery of it in the situation. |
| Look for deference and status in the client’s response to my professional persona. | Look for the sense of freedom and of real connection to the client, as a consequence of no longer needing to maintain a professional façade. |

**Smilkstein, Rita. *We’re Born to Learn: Using the Brain’s Natural Learning Process to Create Today’s Curriculum* Corwin Press, Inc. 2003.**

**ISBN 0-7619-4642-X**

*Smilkstein, a developmental English teacher at North Seattle Community College, has merged neuroscience research with pedagogy. She has conducted research around the world in how people learn, including those who are ‘successful’ and those who have been marginalized as ‘deficient’ or ‘remedial.’ This book shows what happens when students are challenged to ‘see if you can figure this out.’*

**Selected Passages:**

“One of the most important insights to be gained from this research is that, essentially, people learn by making and correcting (with feedback from others or themselves) their own mistakes, that is, by practicing, through trial and error. When teachers, parents, and students come to accept, and even value, this making of mistakes by learners, one of the greatest barriers to learning is eliminated. The positive effect of removing this obstacle was illustrated to me when, in one of my basic grammar courses for adults reading and writing at the fourth- to sixth-grade level, a student came to the chalkboard to write one his practice sentences and said, as he walked to the front of the room, “I’m probably going to make some really good mistakes here”—and the rest of the class burst into spontaneous applause. He did make some mistakes, mistakes that many of the other students also had made. As a result of the ensuing class discussion, everyone learned more. The applause was justified” (43).

From pages 71-73:

**The Brain’s Innate Resources**

* The brain has a natural learning process.
* The brain has an innate sense of logic.
* The brain is an innate pattern seeker.
* The brain is an innate problem solver.
* The brain is innately imaginative and creative (can see in new ways).
* The brain is innately motivated to learn.

**Five Rules of How the Brain Learns**

1. *Dendrites, synapses, and neural networks grow only from what is already there.*
2. *Dendrites, synapses, and neural networks grow for what is actively, personally, and specifically experienced and practiced.*
3. *Dendrites, synapses, and neural networks grow from stimulating experiences.*
4. *Use it or lose it.*
5. *Emotions affect learning.*

***Smith, Frank. To Think,* Teachers College Press 1990.**

***ISBN 0-8077-3057-2***

**Selected Passages:**

“If we were all such powerful thinkers as infants, do we lose this ability as we grow older? Or is infant thinking irrelevant to school and the grown-up world? Do unschooled adults think like babies—or would we all be better off if we could think with the clarity of infancy? What kinds of thinking might have to be taught, and in what circumstances would they best be learned? What is thinking anyway? Are there different kinds of thinking, some innate and others must be taught? Is something lacking in the way many people think most of the time? To what extent is thinking socially determined? If schools currently teach in ways that preclude or hamper the development of thinking, how can anyone be sure that deliberate efforts to teach thinking—presumably in the thoughtless way teaching had hitherto been done—will not make matters worse?” (Preface, *vii*).

“We cannot look into other people’s heads to see if they can speak French, dislike artichokes, or have an interest in computers, but we can get a good idea from the way they behave and talk. And we can only examine our own thinking in the same detached way. We cannot look into our own head to inspect our skills, likes, or interests. We have to see what we can do and prefer to do” (Preface, *viii*).

“Like learning, the development of thinking depends on the company we keep; it depends on the way we perceive ourselves, which depends in turn on the way other people treat us. The development of how we think is affected by how we see people around us behave, and by the role we see for ourselves in their activities. When we are encouraged or inspired to engage in what other people are doing, when our own imagination is in control, then learning comes naturally and effortlessly, including everything that is essential about “learning to think.” People become thinkers who associate with thinking people, including the thinking people who can be met through literature and art” (125).

“Nothing in the analysis of thinking I have made helps a teacher—or an administrator—who believes that thinking can be taught through systematic instruction. Everything I have said, on the other hand, should support teachers and administrators who believe that students can be trusted to learn, and to think, provided the students are immersed in an environment that promotes and encourages thought” (126).